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STATEWIDE FURBEARER PROGRAM

ANNUAL MANAGEMENT & HARVEST REPORT

1992-1993

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FURBEARER PROGRAM

1992-93 ANNUAL

MANAGEMENT AND HARVEST REPORT

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Program Goals:

1) To provide ecological, recreational, and economical benefits of the state's furbearers through sound resource management.

2) To address the social impacts of furbearers on human health, private property, and agricultural values.

Statewide Objectives:

1) Monitor population status and the distribution of each furbearer species.

2) Maintain the state's viable populations of each species through the conservation and enhancement of furbearer habitats.

3) Provide the various publics with the opportunity for consumptive and nonconsumptive uses of the furbearer resource.

4) Optimize recreational harvest opportunities through asustained use management approach.

5) Minimize animal damage and/or nuisance wildlife problems utilizing Department policies and management practices.

6) Promote trapping practices that minimize the take of non-target species and the inhumane harvest of furbearers.

7) Develop a public understanding and acceptance of the basis for the consumptive use of furbearers.

Management Strategies:

1) Identify and associate species distribution and population trends with delineated habitat base or ecoregion.

2) Monitor species status through population/habitat surveys, occurrence reports, and harvest information.

3) Utilize regulatory mechanisms to provide trapper/hunter participation, harvest data and biological information.

Management and Harvest Activities:

1) Annual winter furbearer track surveys are conducted by biologists within the NW and SW montane forest ecoregions (Trapping Districts 1-3) of the state. The number of track detections are recorded along selected routes for furbearers which include marten, fisher, wolverine, lynx, and bobcat; prey species such as snowshoe hare and pine squirrels; and lion, weasel and coyote. Surveys are utilized to determine 1) species occurrence, 2) annual track detection rates, and 3) relative abundance. A prey indices of snowshoe hare numbers is used to predict furbearer population fluctuations and annual recruitment. This is a continuing activity to develop route design, detection methods, and to investigate population estimation techniques.

2) Biologists in the Glaciated/Non-Glaciated Plains and Mountains and Glaciated/Non-Glaciated Eastern Plains ecoregions (Trapping Districts 4,5,6,7) are in the process of developing lagamorph prey indices. Through the use of headlight surveys, the number of lagamorphs are counted on the same routes each year. This index to prey availability is designed to predict bobcat population fluctuations and annual recruitment levels.

3) Trapper and houndsman logbooks are distributed statewide to individual cooperators, compiled, and data recorded annually. Logbook information contributes additional species population occurrence data to delineate the statewide distribution of selected furbearer species (fisher, wolverine, lynx, otter, and swift fox).

4) Department furbearer occurrence/distribution reports are distributed and collected annually. Reports are completed only by Department personnel on verified reports or self-observations. Accumulated reports provide species occurrence data to delineate the statewide distribution of selected furbearer species (fisher, wolverine, lynx, otter, and swift fox).

5) The annual harvest of marten, fisher, wolverine, lynx, bobcat, otter, and a portion of the beaver harvest was monitored through a statewide pelt tagging and harvest registration system. All tag sealing and written registration is conducted by Fish, Wildlife and Parks personnel. Marten, fisher, wolverine and beaver pelts are tagged under authority of the state while otter, lynx and bobcat are tagged under mandate of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to meet federal CITES export requirements. Harvest data recorded during harvest registration include furharvester information (trapper, hunter, or houndsman), species harvested, harvest method, and specific harvest

information which includes date taken, trapping district, county, site specific location, legal description, pelt tag number, and sex of the animal. A summary of this data is compiled and reported in annual report.

6) Harvest data on two other furbearers and six fur producing mammals, (muskrat, mink, weasel, skunk, coyote, fox, raccoon, badger) and additional information on tagged furbearers, was collected through a trapping and furbearer harvest survey questionnaire which was mailed to 1,898 license holders after the close of the 1992-93 trapping season. No reminder was sent to nonrespondents. Survey information requested included the estimated number of species harvest by county and trapping district, harvest method, and harvest effort. Effort data was collected on all species through the harvest survey. The response rate was 48 percent. This rate was corrected to 100% through an expansion factor of 2.10. Summary harvest statistics were generated by a software package at the FWP Research Bureau and reported in the annual harvest report (Haskins et al. 1993).

7) Mandatory carcass collections were required for fisher and wolverine during 1992-93. Bobcat skulls were required to be surrendered in Trapping Districts 2 and 3 while marten skulls were requested to be turned in on a voluntary basis statewide.

8) All carcasses and skulls are sent to the Department's wildlife research laboratory in Bozeman for biological analysis to determine each specimens age, sex, body condition, food habits, reproductive history, and collect tissue samples. Summary information is reported in the annual laboratory report (Aune et al. 1993).

9) A fur dealer survey was conducted by the statewide furbearer coordinator from contacting the primary fur dealers in Montana in order to obtain average pelt values for each fur-producing species. This information is used to calculate economic fur values of the annual harvest.

Statewide Management and Harvest Results:

Management and harvest results are recorded, analyzed and reported by state, trapping district (includes ecoregion) and county. These units are delineated in Figure 1.

The statewide summary of results from annual winter furbearer track surveys, which indicate total number of track detections of prey species, selected furbearers and several predators, is presented through 1992-93 in Table 1. Corresponding indices of track detection rates are provided in Table 2.

Figure 1. State map delineating trapping districts, ecosystems, and counties in Montana

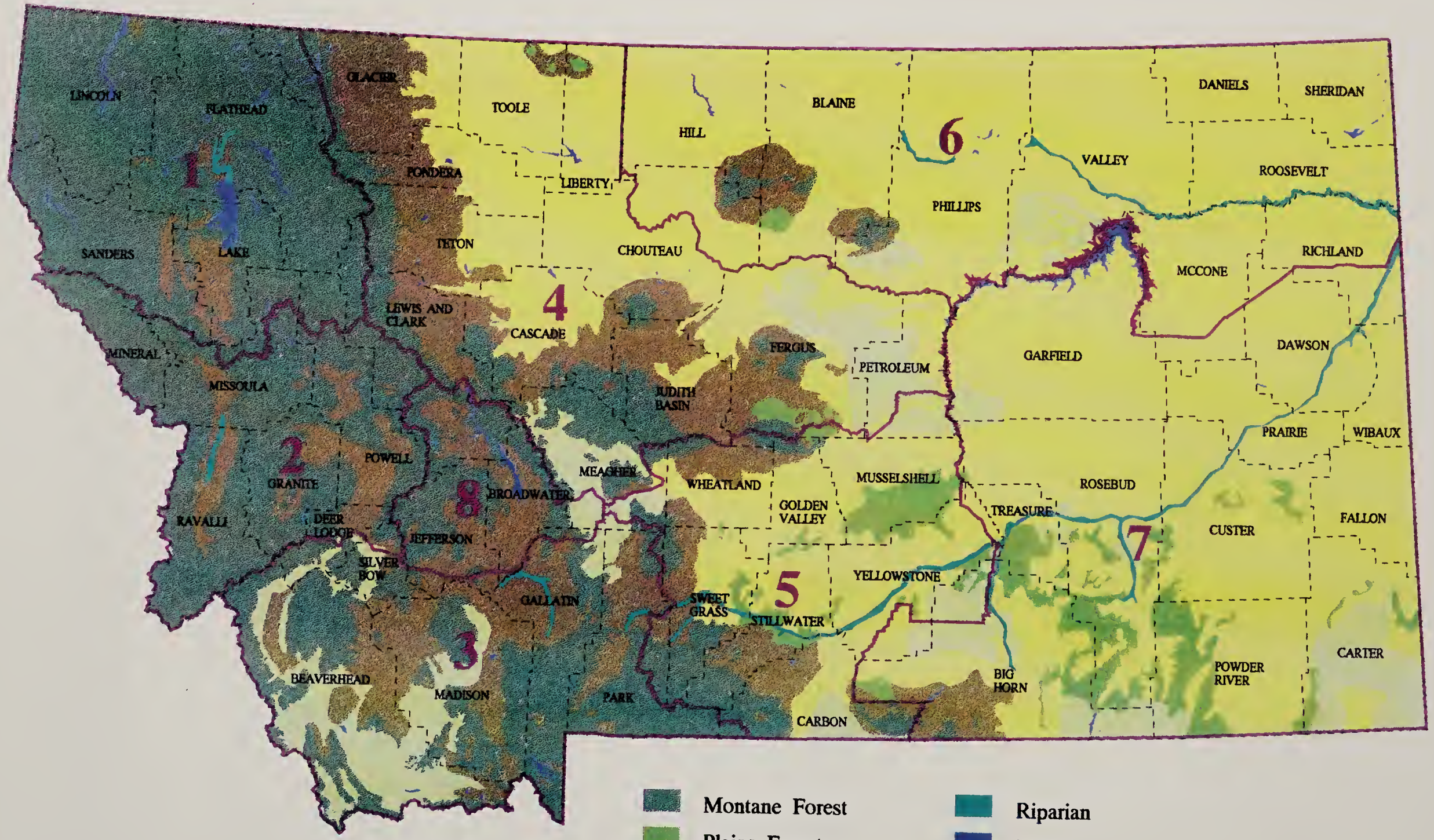


Table 1. Statewide furbearer survey route summary.

Year	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
# Routes	12 (1-3 times)	7 (1-3 times)	24 (1-3 times)
Total Miles	297	173	527
Hares	1181	1937	4227
Squirrels	--	--	--
Marten	221	60	424
Fisher	0	0	1
Wolverine	1	0	5
Lynx	31	11	21
Bobcat	1	23	16
Lion	5	15	15
Weasel	--	--	--
Coyote	--	373	262

Table 2. Statewide track detections/100 miles on furbearer survey routes.

Year	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Hares	398.0	1119.6	802.1
Squirrels	--	--	--
Marten	74.4	34.6	80.4
Fisher	0.0	0.0	0.2
Wolverine	0.3	0.0	0.9
Lynx	10.4	6.3	4.0
Bobcat	0.3	13.3	3.0
Lion	1.7	8.7	2.8
Weasel	--	--	--
Coyote	--	215.6	49.7

Long-term trends in species detection rates may indicate changes in relative species abundance. Statewide results indicate track detection rates increased, from previous years, for snowshoe hare, marten, fisher, and wolverine although decreases did occur for lynx and bobcat.

Occurrence information from trapper and houndsmen logbooks and FWP occurrence/distribution reports are shown in Tables 3 and 4, respectively. These tables reflect the number of logbooks or reports received on selected species, the number of occurrence reports by species, and the number of counties that these reports occurred. The number of logbook reports for fisher, wolverine and lynx increased from 1991-92 to 1992-93, while the number of counties reported increased for fisher and lynx, but remained the same for wolverine, during this period. Occurrence/distribution report results are more mixed, with wolverine reports increasing while the number of fisher and lynx reports decreased 50% between 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Statewide harvest information on the number of trapping licenses sold and the species harvest, by trapping district, for the 1992-93 furbearer season are compiled and presented in Tables 5 and 6. Detailed harvest statistics by species and trapping district are available in Haskins et al. (1993).

Statewide trapping license sales during 1992-93 increased about 7 percent over the 1991-92 period. Although pelt prices remained relatively depressed (Table 8) with several species demonstrating only slight increases, a response was noted by increased trapper participation.

However, a nearly 15 percent decline in total number of animals harvested during 1992-93 from the 1991-92 period was apparent (Table 7). Again, depressed pelt prices is suspect, despite stable to increasing populations of most furbearer, predator, and nongame species in the state.

Long-term (10 years) statewide trends in individual species harvests, by trapping districts (and ecoregions), is presented in Figures 2 through 16. The statewide trend in number of animals harvested for most species generally continued an upward swing during 1992-93, from the low harvests reported during the 1989-90 and 1990-91 periods. These changes are variable, however, among the seven trapping districts or ecoregions. Harvest numbers may correspond to species abundance within each ecoregion or habitat base, although other variables, such as trapper effort and catch rate, may be better indicators for corrolating population trends from the harvest data. Under this assumption, their are specific implications for habitat and species management opportunities.

Results of carcass collections of fisher and wolverine, and skull turn-in's from marten and bobcat, are summarized and reported in the annual wildlife laboratory report (Aune et al. 1993).

Table 3. Statewide summary of trapper and houndsman logbook reports, by species (and # of counties).

Year	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Number of logbooks	--	6	8
Fisher	--	1(1)	3(2)
Wolverine	--	4(2)	9(2)
Lynx	--	8(1)	16(4)

Table 4. Statewide summary of FWP occurrence/distribution reports, by species (and # of counties).

Year	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Number of reports	--	10	8
Fisher	--	4(1)	2(1)
Wolverine	--	2(2)	4(2)
Lynx	--	4(3)	2(2)

Table 5. Montana trapping and hunting license sales, 1992-93.

License Type	Kalispell	Missoula	Bozeman	Great Falls	Billings	Glasgow	Miles City	Helena	State
General	233	268	219	156	183	47	170	358	1,634
Youth	4	4	6	5	0	0	0	3	22
Landowner	8	5	11	45	31	5	108	27	240
Nonresident	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Total	245	277	236	206	214	52	280	388	1,898

Table 6. Montana furbearer, predator and nongame species harvest summary, 1992-93.

Trapping District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total*
Beaver	329	885	2,317	575	541	749	214	5,707
Otter	10	3	19	1	2	0	0	35
Muskrat	1,076	2,613	1,235	644	300	231	962	6,912
Mink	281	256	63	50	109	192	13	841
Marten	358	143	96	6	0	--	--	603
Fisher	4	1	--	--	--	--	--	5
Wolverine	1	1	4	0	0	--	--	6
Lynx	1	1	0	0	0	--	--	2
Bobcat	173	103	111	95	172	28	264	946
Weasel	201	103	59	2	2	0	0	378
Skunk	164	256	57	130	115	483	749	1,548
Coyote	365	967	1,460	1,453	719	845	4,822	10,862
Fox	48	208	516	411	862	210	3,091	5,453
Raccoon	82	115	520	283	606	111	310	2,139
Badger	0	8	73	61	21	364	271	482
Total	3,093	5,663	6,530	3,711	3,449	2,277	9,830	35,919

*Figure may include animals harvested in unknown trapping district.

Table 7. Montana furbearer, predator and nongame species harvest summary, 1984-85 to 1992-93.

Year	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Beaver	10,378	14,636	18,142	12,356	8,987	8,710	5,497	5,133	5,707
Otter	40	50	62	38	30	45	26	34	35
Muskrat	25,849	18,270	32,706	41,578	23,766	12,538	10,778	12,260	6,912
Mink	2,155	1,886	2,762	3,964	3,148	2,144	1,175	1,192	841
Marten	2,392	2,444	2,366	2,393	2,426	1,283	736	996	603
Fisher	---	15	14	10	13	9	1	4	5
Wolverine	25	16	10	8	9	10	6	9	6
Lynx	62	37	23	15	22	15	2	3	2
Bobcat	1,751	1,375	1,305	1,198	832	618	370	1,062	947
Weasel	745	802	938	992	676	464	308	393	378
Skunk	6,978	7,442	8,378	7,958	4,743	1,525	1,384	1,649	1,548
Coyote	8,899	13,242	13,550	15,958	7,838	4,750	4,559	7,432	10,862
Fox	7,290	7,300	8,468	11,276	9,329	3,927	3,529	6,935	5,453
Raccoon	6,180	8,746	8,764	9,166	4,485	2,765	1,452	3,987	2,139
Badger	1,713	2,830	2,108	2,538	1,612	727	498	920	482
TOTAL	74,457	79,091	99,596	109,448	67,916	39,321	30,321	42,009	35,920

Table 8. Average Montana pelt values, by species.

YEAR	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Beaver	9.52	11.81	8.02
Otter	25.15	17.50	39.76
Muskrat	0.73	1.30	1.18
Mink	13.84	20.50	10.21
Marten	25.47	25.58	17.24
Fisher	35.00	40.00	35.00
Wolverine	140.00	130.00	135.00
Lynx	120.00	110.00	100.00
Bobcat	90.98	87.00	85.37
Weasel	0.27	2.25	3.50
Skunk	4.05	4.25	4.52
Coyote	13.01	23.95	22.18
Fox	8.45	22.50	11.17
Raccoon	4.32	8.28	10.68
Badger	5.29	7.65	8.38

Figure 2. Statewide beaver harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

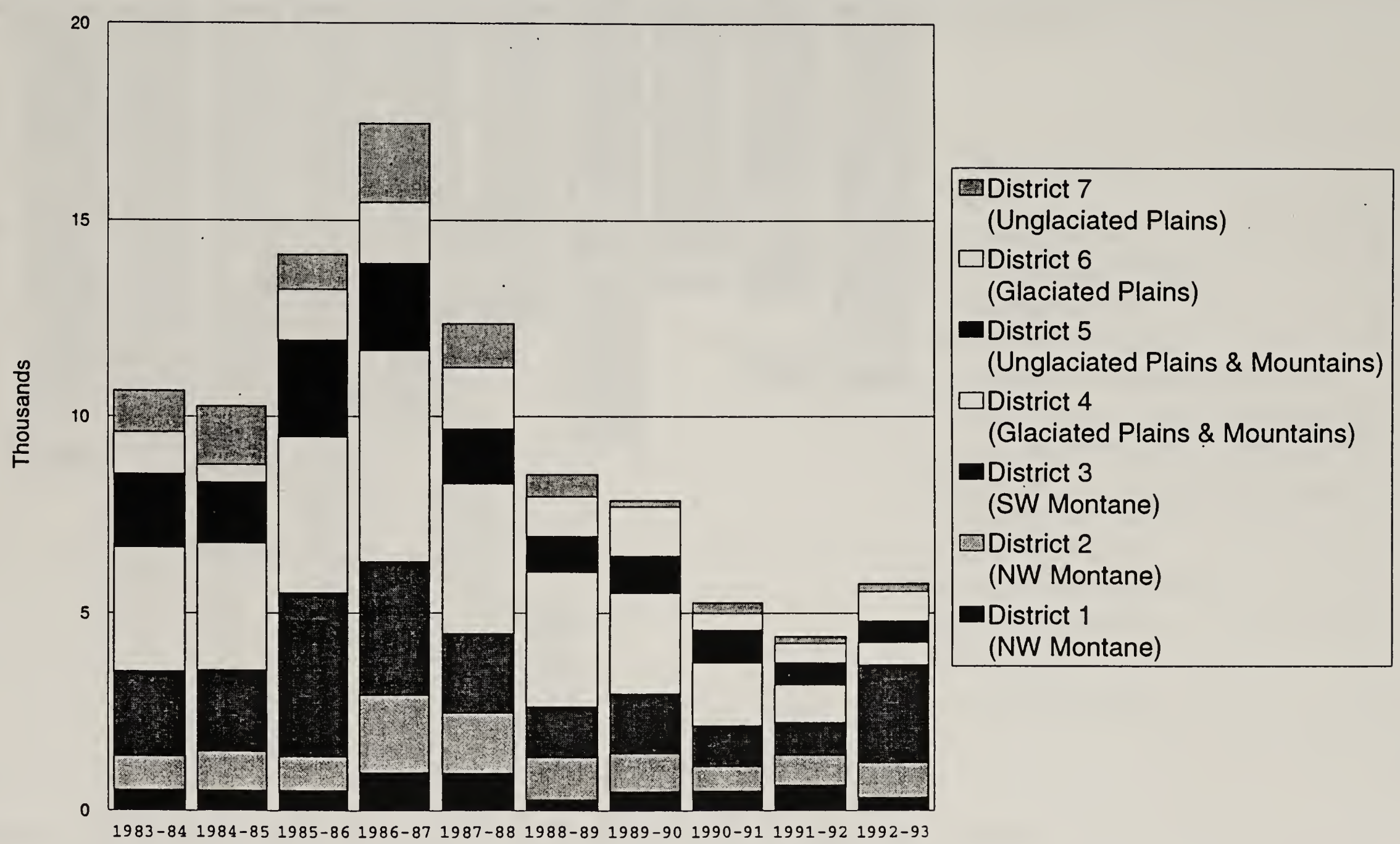


Figure 3. Statewide otter harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

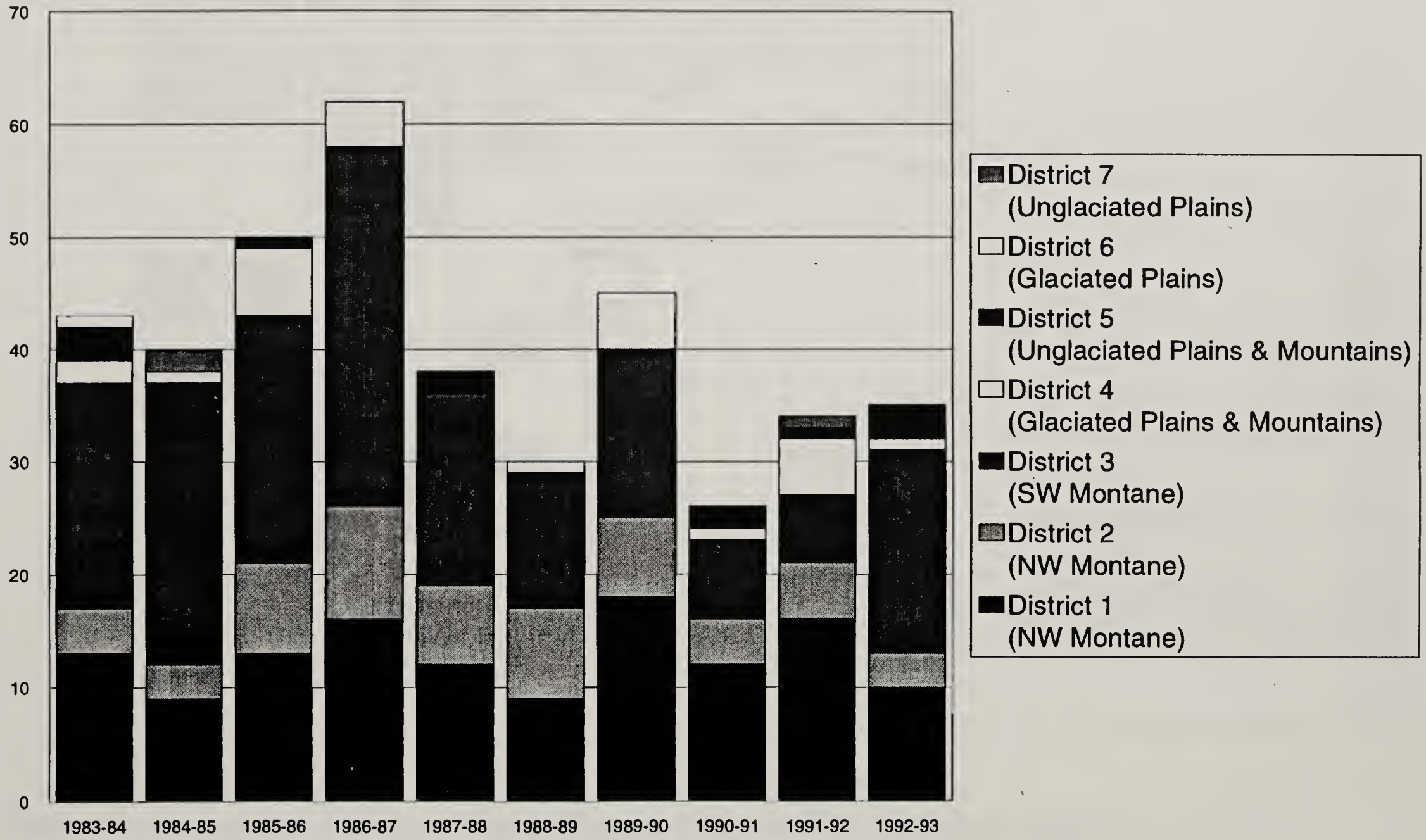


Figure 4. Statewide muskrat harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

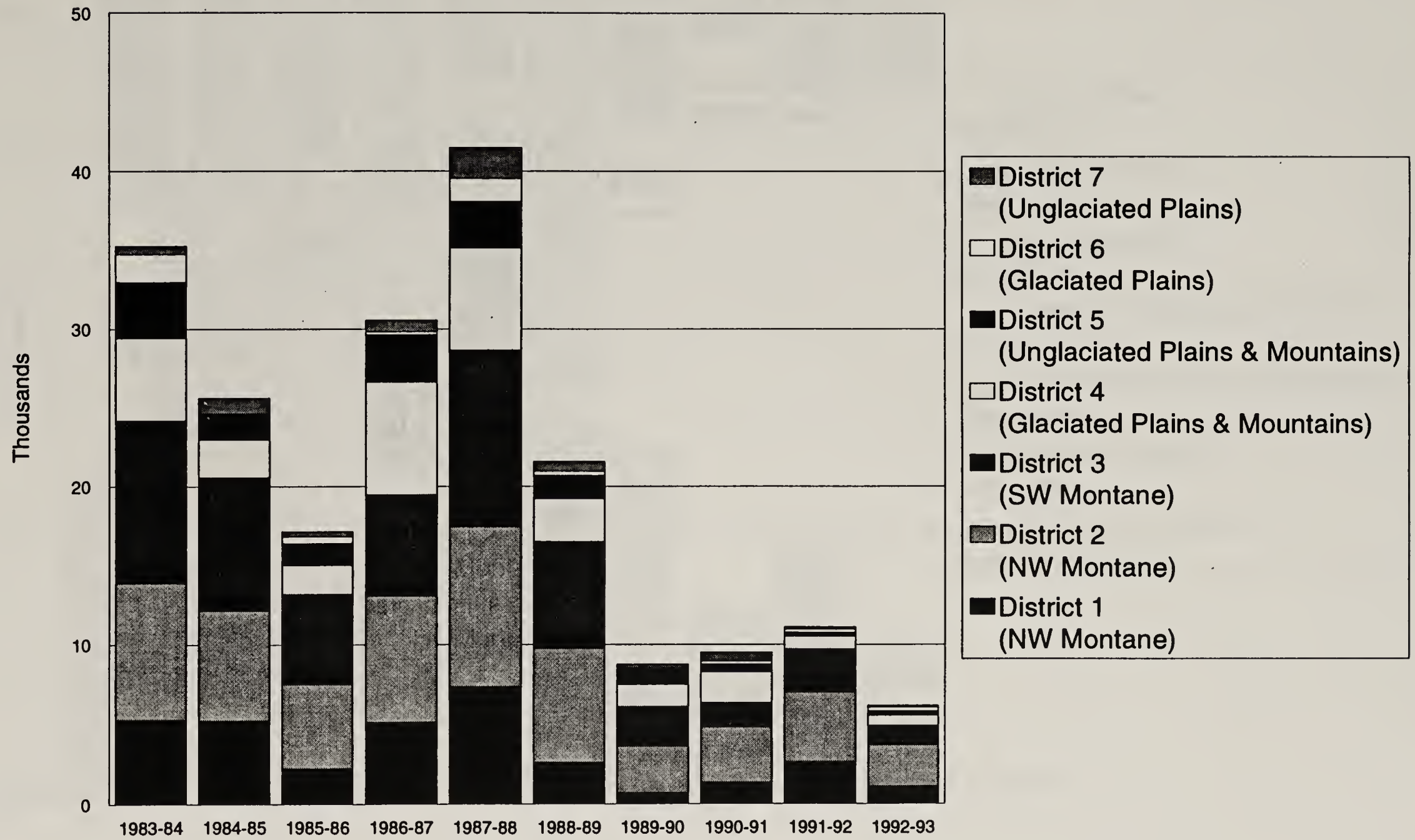


Figure 5. Statewide mink harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

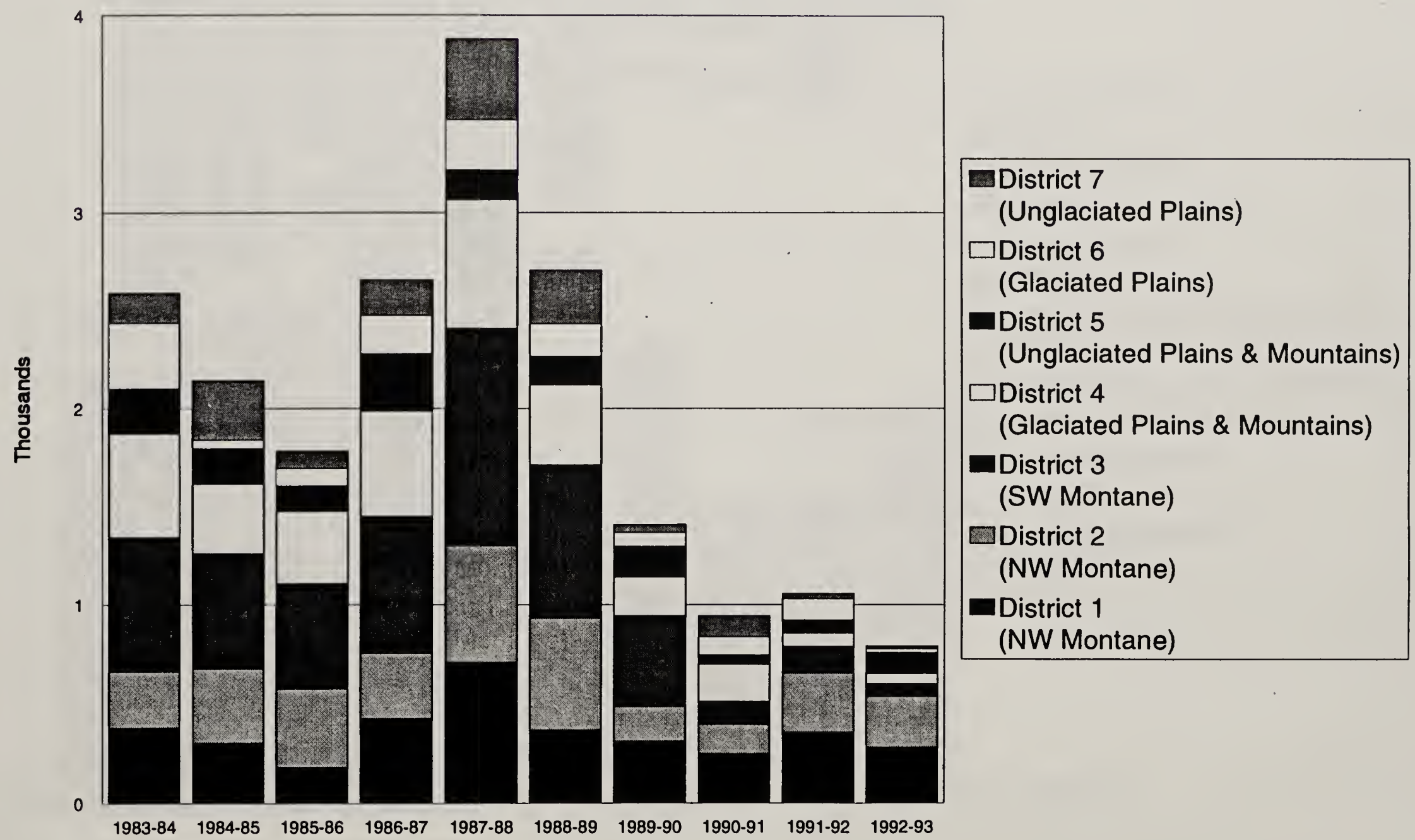


Figure 6. Statewide marten harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93

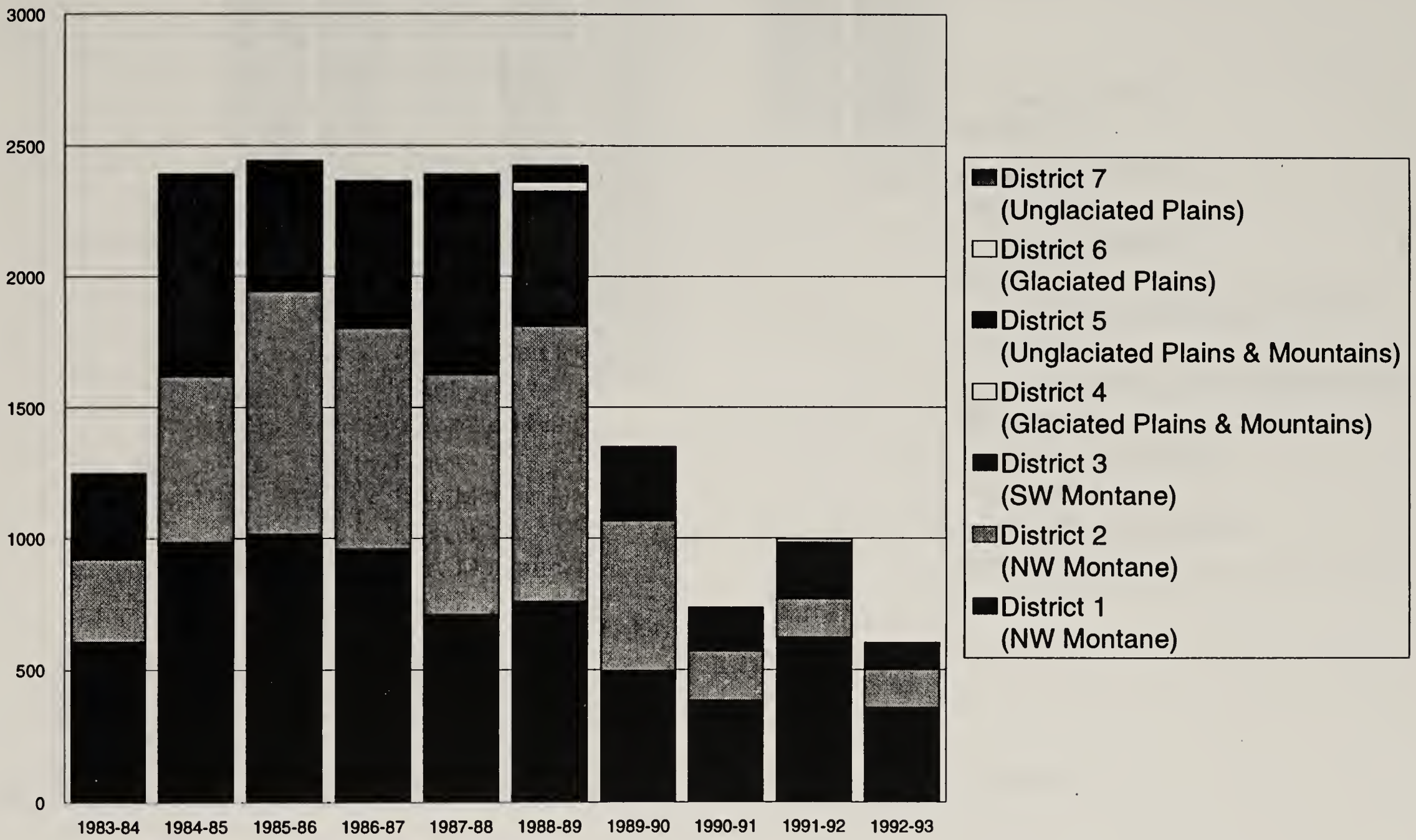


Figure 7. Statewide fisher harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

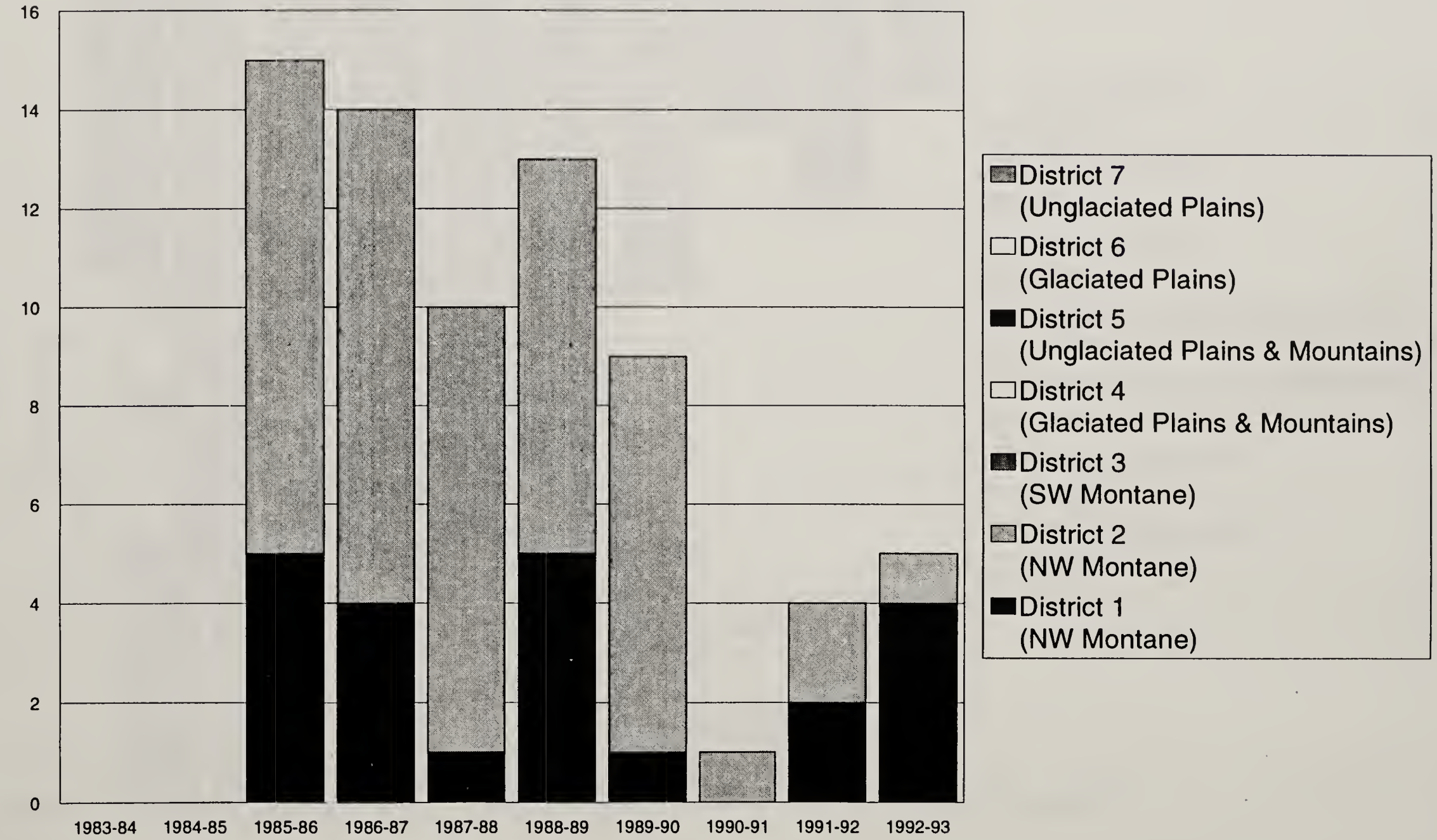


Figure 8. Statewide wolverine harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

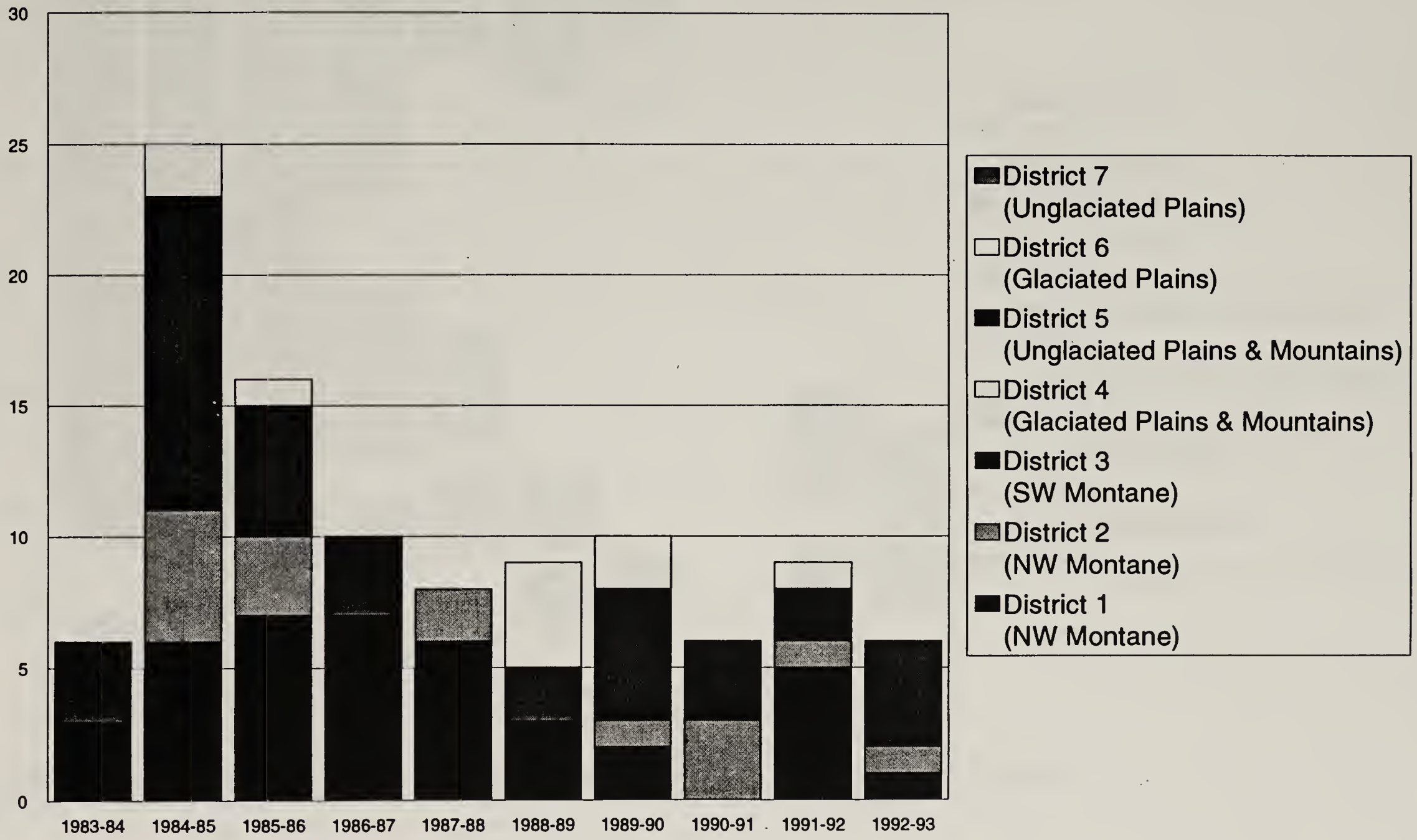


Figure 9. Statewide lynx harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

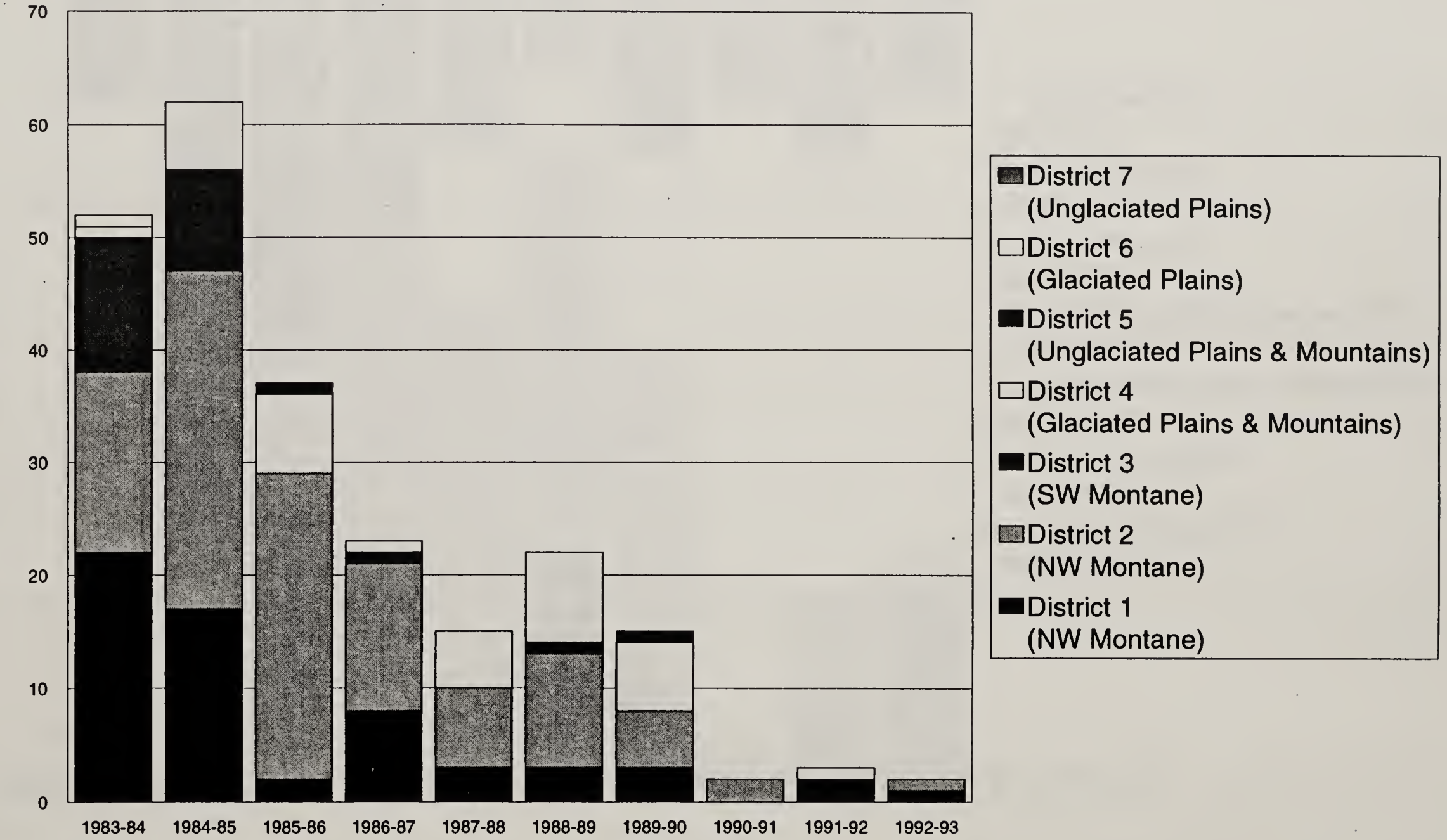


Figure 10. Statewide bobcat harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93

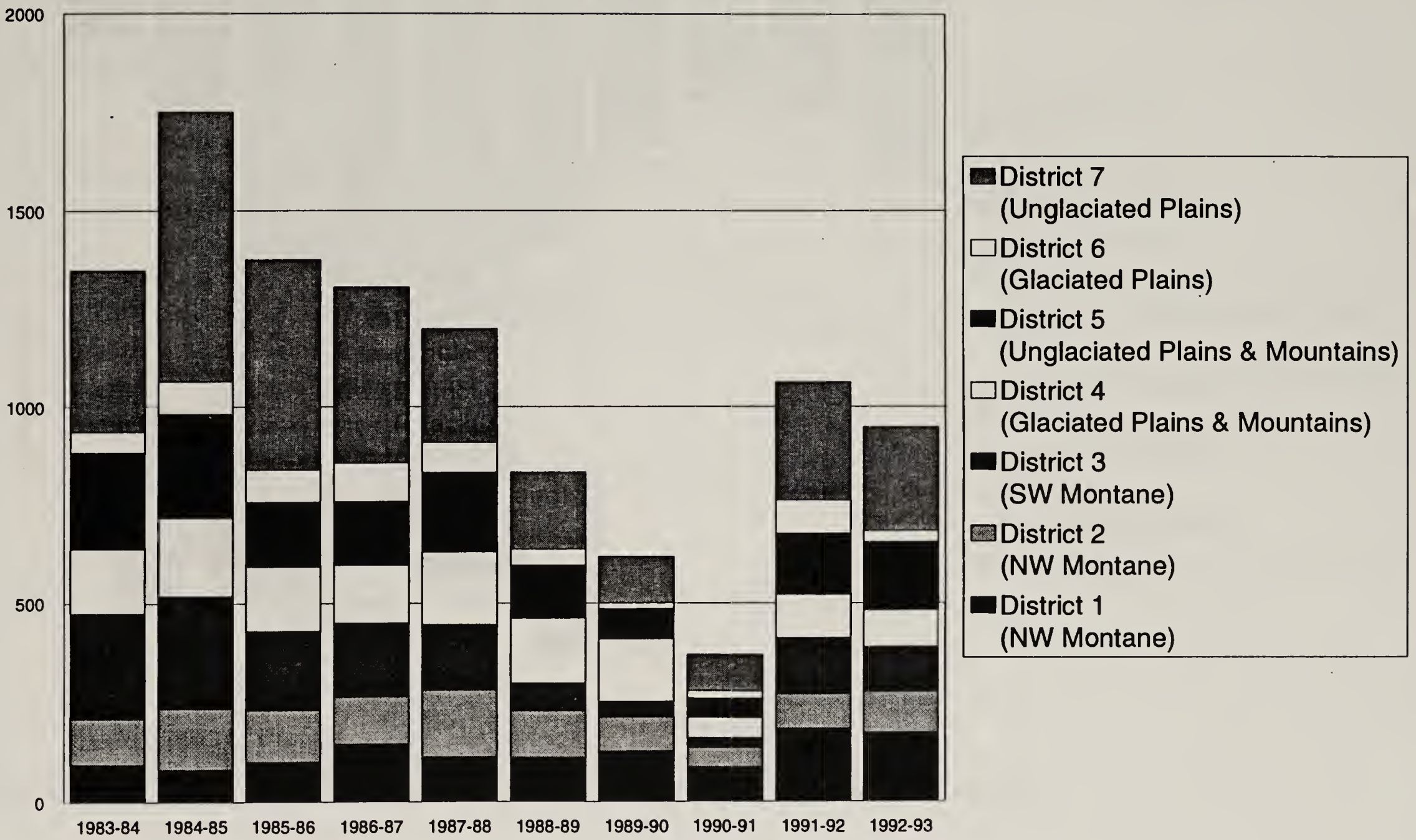


Figure 11. Statewide weasel harvest by trapping district (ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

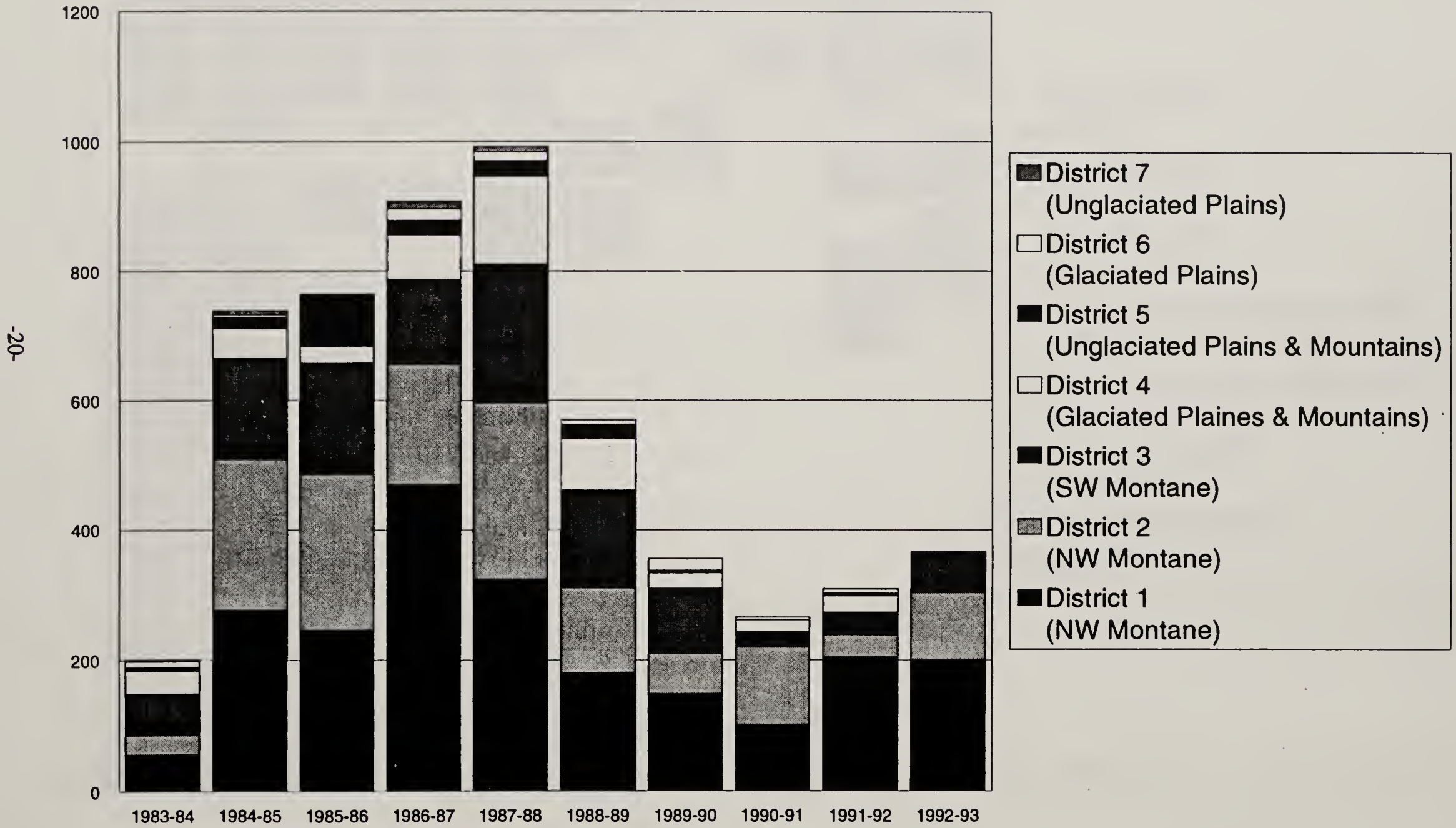


Figure 12. Statewide skunk harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

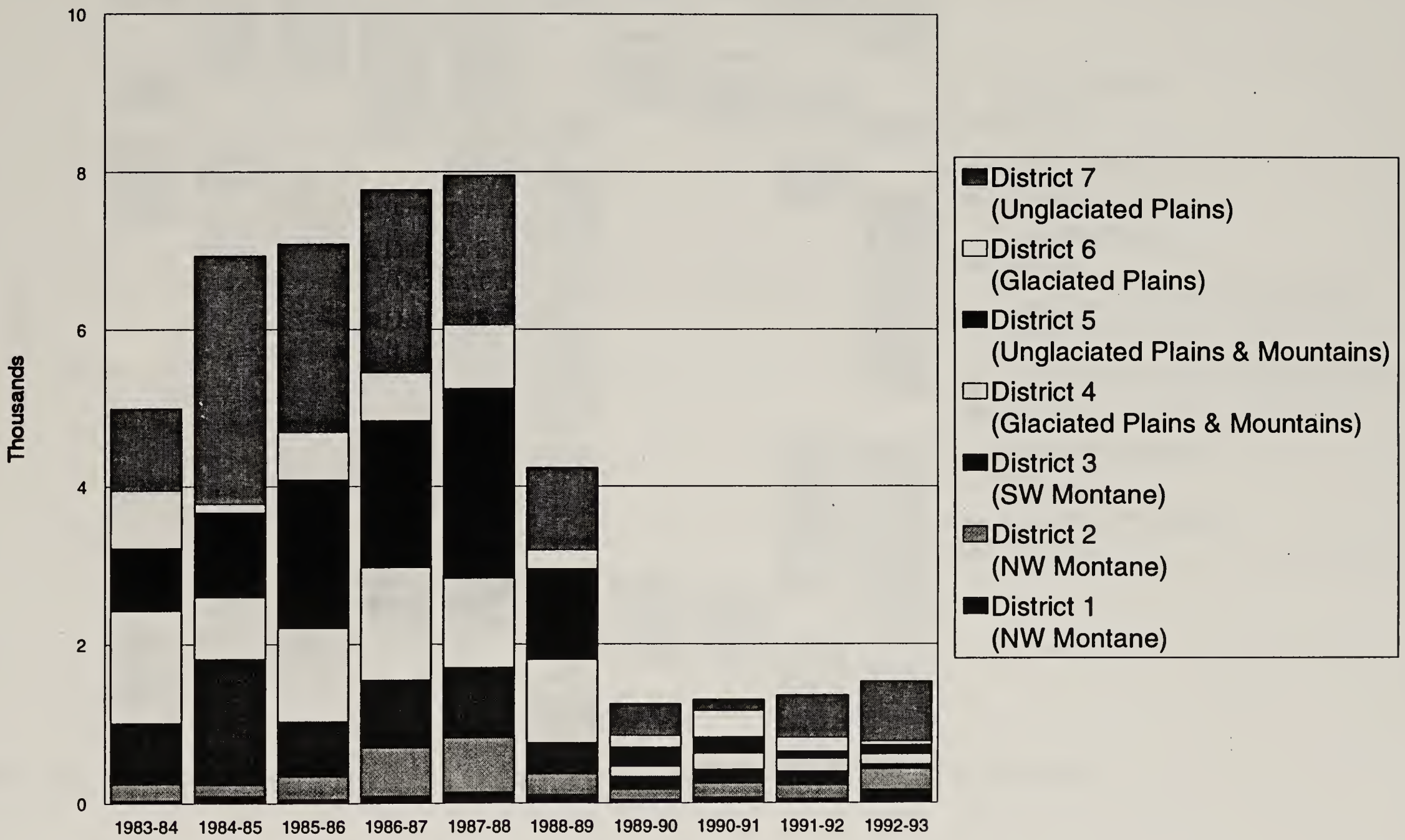


Figure 13. Statewide coyote harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

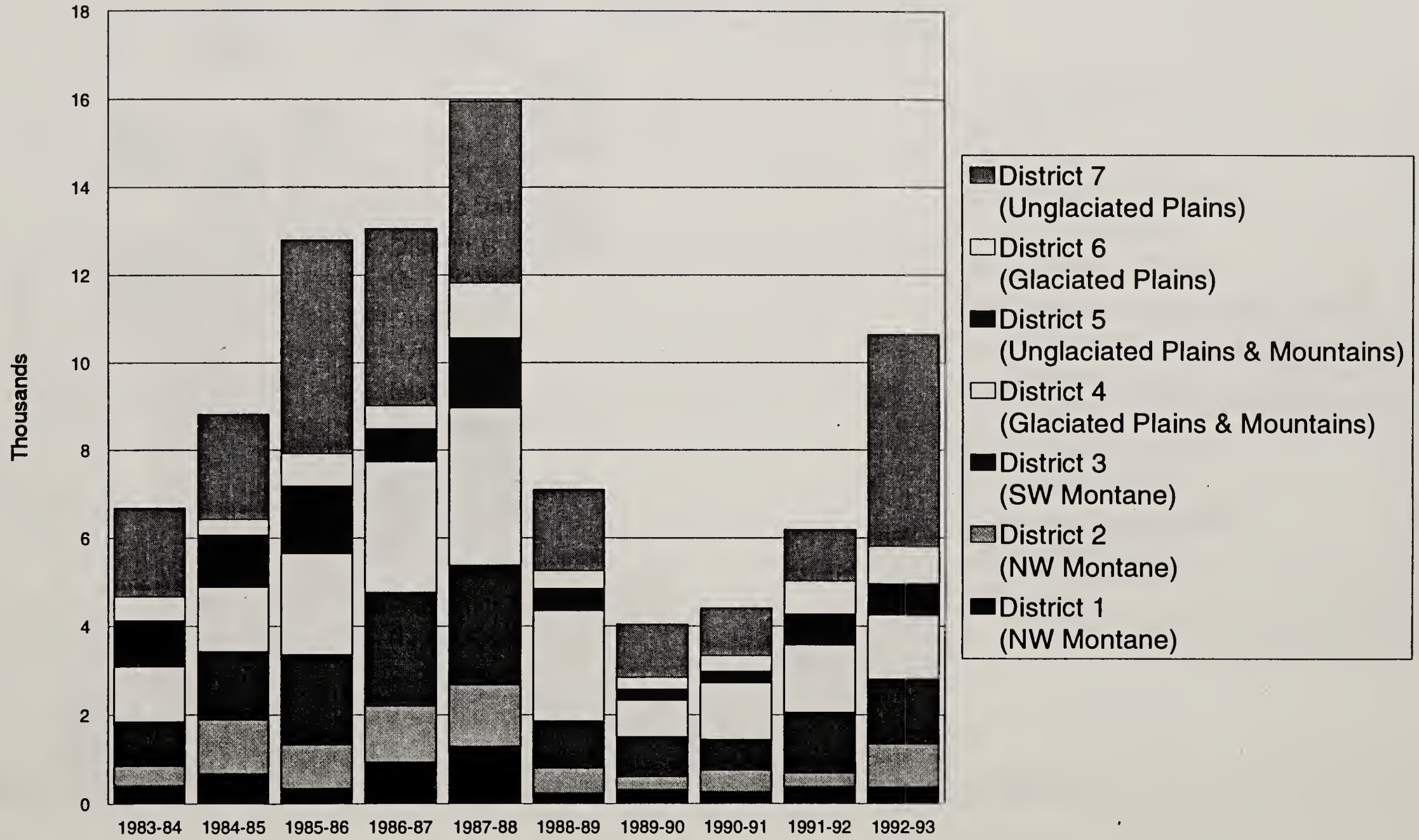


Figure 14. Statewide fox harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

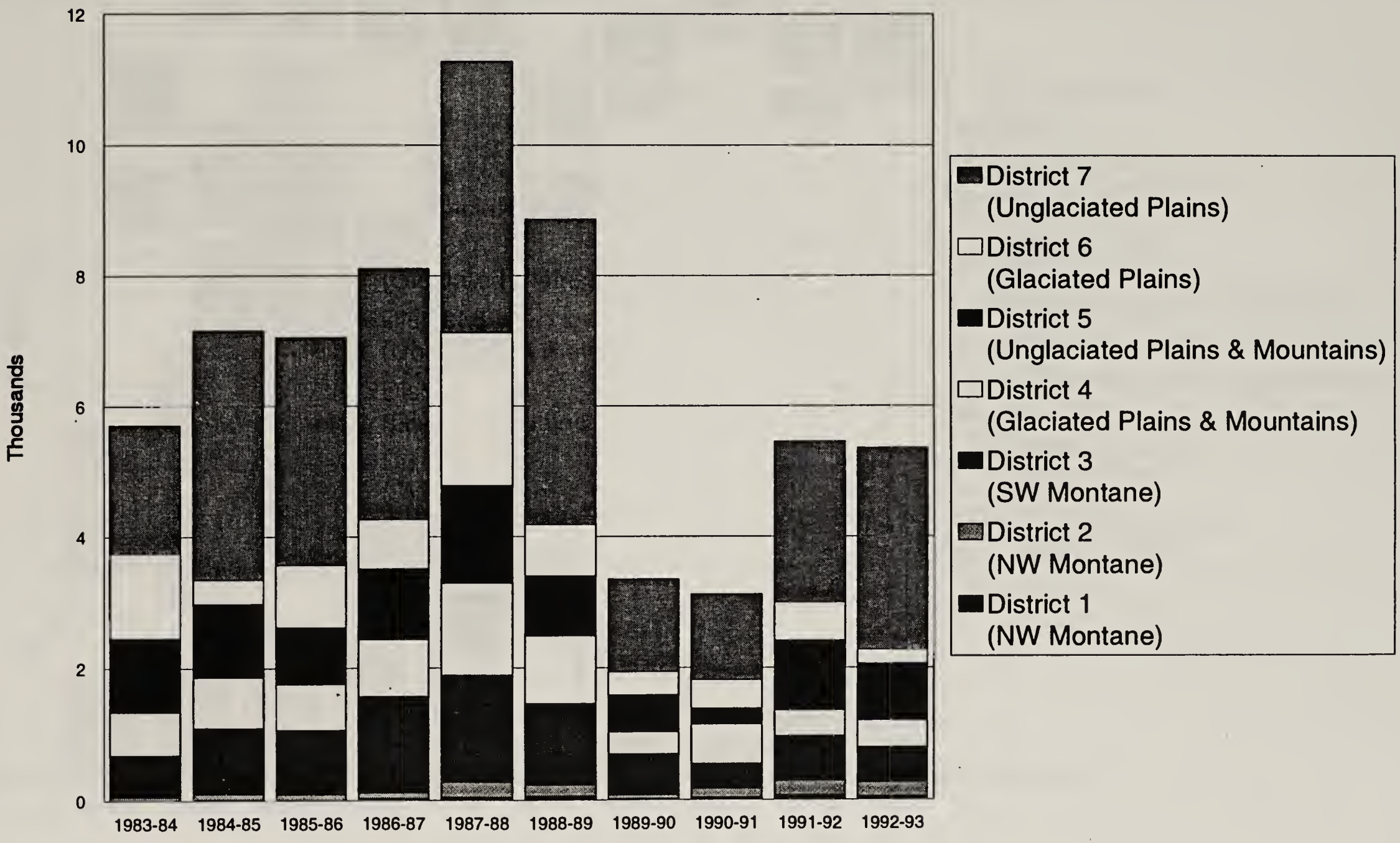


Figure 15. Statewide raccoon harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.

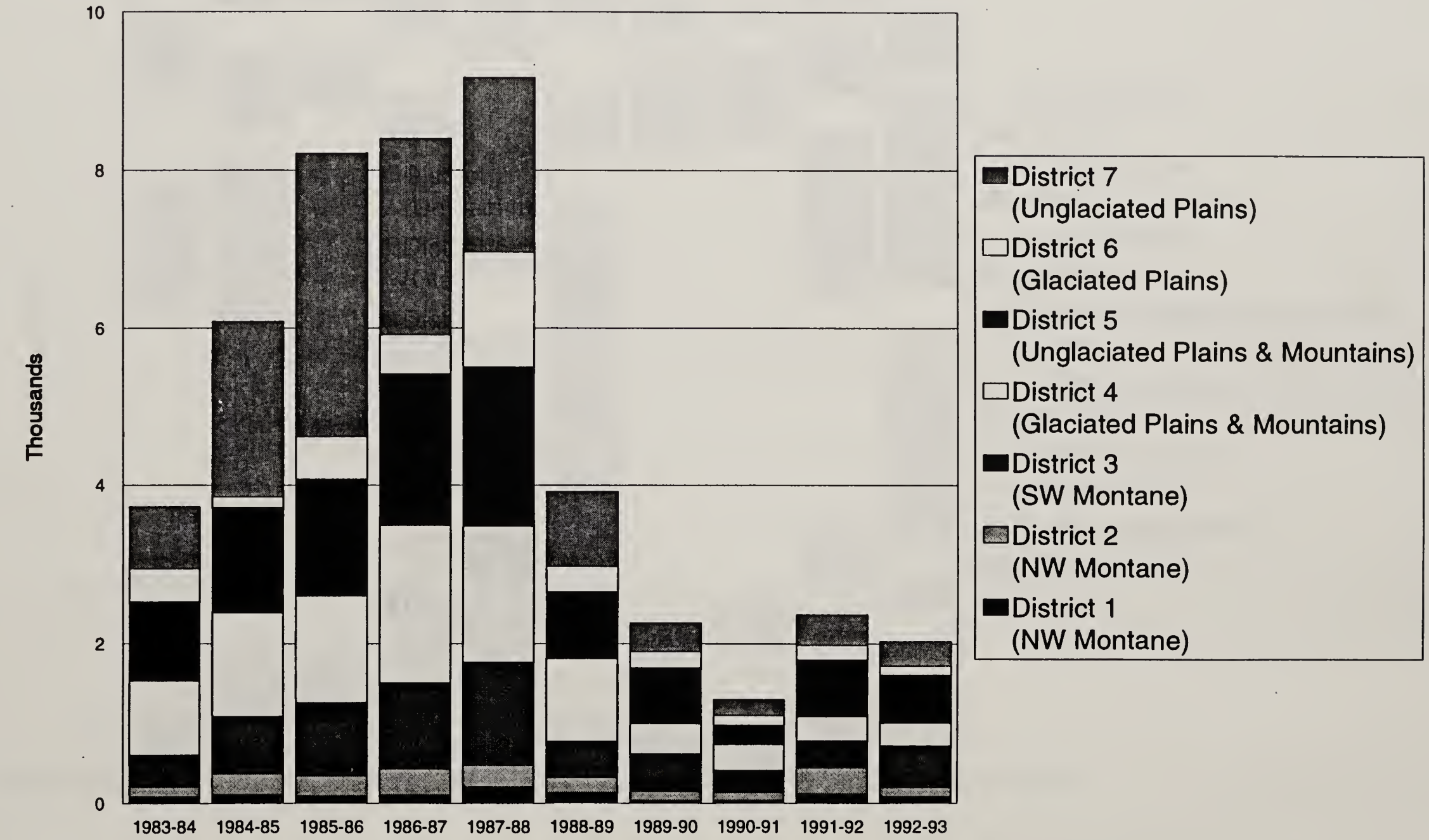
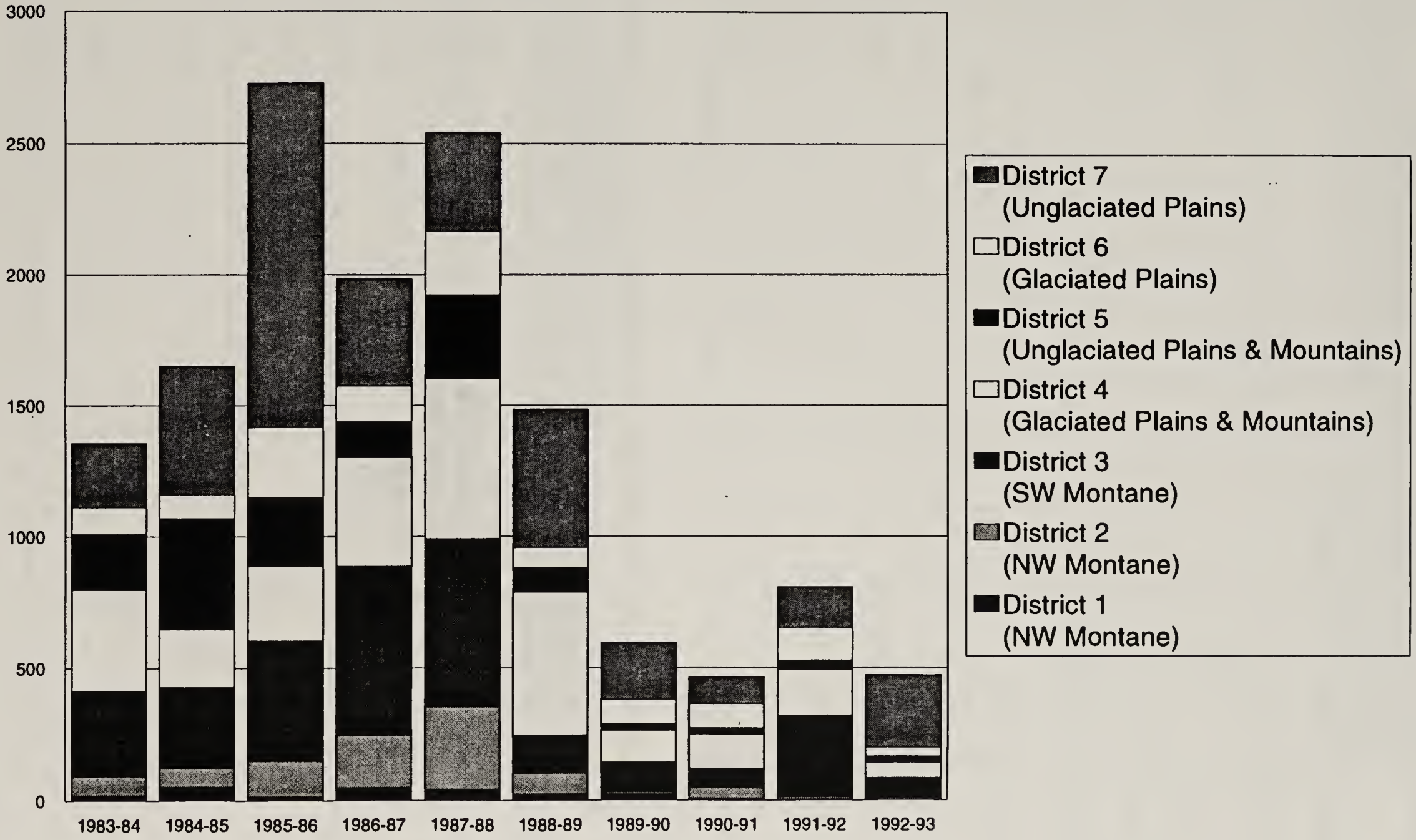


Figure 16. Statewide badger harvest by trapping district (and ecoregion), 1983-84 to 1992-93.



Trapping District (Ecoregion) Management and Harvest Results:

Trapping District 1 (NW Montane)

Description:

Counties:

Habitat Conditions:

Management Direction:

Population Data:

Survey Routes: Tables 9 and 10.
Logbooks:
Occurrence Reports:

Harvest Statistics:

Harvest:
Trap Days:
Catch Rate:

Lab data presented - from carcass and skull collections in graph and table format with text. Sex, age structure and other biological information.

Trapping District (Ecoregion) Population Status and Trend:

Combine survey results, detection rates for selected species and prey indices, observation report results, trap days and catch rate (effort), and sex/age structure to predict trend in table format and in text form.

Recommendations or Management Evaluation:

Table 9. Furbearer survey route summary, Trapping District 1.

Year	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
# Routes	6 (1-2 times)	No data	11 (1-3 times)
Total Miles	100	--	251
Hares	--	--	1297
Squirrels	--	--	--
Marten	137	--	315
Fisher	--	--	1
Wolverine	--	--	5
Lynx	--	--	3
Bobcat	--	--	6
Lion	--	--	11
Weasel	--	--	--
Coyote	--	--	--

Table 10. Track detections/100 miles on furbearer survey routes, Trapping District 1.

Year	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Hares	--	No data	515.7
Squirrels	--	--	--
Marten	137.0	--	125.2
Fisher	--	--	0.4
Wolverine	--	--	2.0
Lynx	--	--	1.2
Bobcat	--	--	2.4
Lion	--	--	4.4
Weasel	--	--	--
Coyote	--	--	--

Trapping District 2 (NW Montane)

Description:

Counties:

Habitat Conditions:

Management Direction:

Population Data:

Survey Routes: Tables 11 and 12.
Logbooks:
Occurrence Reports:

Harvest Statistics:

Harvest:
Trap Days
Catch Rate:

Lab data presented - from carcass and skull collections in graph and table format with text. Sex, age structure and other biological information.

Trapping District (Ecoregion) Population Status and Trend:

Combine survey results, detection rates for selected species and prey indices, observation reports results, trap days and catch rate (effort), and sex/age structure to predict trend in table format and in text form.

Recommendations or Management Evaluation:

Table 11. Furbearer survey route summary, Trapping District 2.

Year	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
# Routes	3 (3 times)	No data	3 (1-2 times)
Total Miles	114	--	70
Hares	438	--	789
Squirrels	--	--	--
Marten	--	--	0
Fisher	--	--	0
Wolverine	--	--	0
Lynx	23	--	6
Bobcat	--	--	2
Lion	--	--	0
Weasel	--	--	0
Coyote	--	--	0

Table 12. Track detections/100 miles on furbearer survey routes, Trapping District 2.

Year	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Hares	384.2	No data	1127.1
Squirrels	--	--	--
Marten	--	--	0.0
Fisher	--	--	0.0
Wolverine	--	--	0.0
Lynx	20.2	--	8.6
Bobcat	--	--	2.8
Lion	--	--	0.0
Weasel	--	--	0.0
Coyote	--	--	0.0

Trapping District 3 (SW Montane)

Description:

Counties:

Habitat Conditions:

Management Direction:

Population Data:

Survey Routes: Tables 13 and 14.
Logbooks:
Occurrence Reports:

Harvest Statistics:

Harvest:
Trap Days:
Catch Rate:

Lab data presented - from carcass and skull collections in graph and table format with text. Sex, age structure and other biological information.

Trapping District (Ecoregion) Population Status and Trend:

Combine survey results, detection rates for selected species and prey indices, observation report results, trap days and catch rate (effort), and sex/age structure to predict trend in table format and in text form.

Recommendations or Management Evaluation:

Table 13. Furbearer survey route summary, Trapping District 3.

Year	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
# Routes	3 (1-2 times)	7 (1-3 times)	10 (1-3 times)
Total Miles	83	173	206
Hares	743	1937	2141
Squirrels	--	--	--
Marten	84	60	109
Fisher	0	0	0
Wolverine	1	0	0
Lynx	8	11	12
Bobcat	1	23	8
Lion	5	15	4
Weasel	--	--	--
Coyote	--	373	262

Table 14. Track detections/100 miles on furbearer survey routes, Trapping District 3.

Year	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Hares	892.0	1120.3	1038.3
Squirrels	--	--	--
Marten	100.8	34.7	52.9
Fisher	0.0	0.0	0.0
Wolverine	1.2	0.0	0.0
Lynx	9.6	6.3	5.8
Bobcat	1.2	13.3	3.8
Lion	6.0	8.7	1.9
Weasel	--	--	--
Coyote	--	215.7	127.1

Trapping District 4 (Glaciated Plains and Mountains)

Description:

Counties:

Habitat Conditions:

Management Direction:

Population Data:

Surveys:
Logbooks:
Occurrence Reports:

Harvest Statistics:

Harvest:
Trap Days:
Catch Rate:

Lab data presented - carcass and skull collections in graph and table format with text. Sex, age structure and other biological information.

Trapping District (Ecoregion) Population Status and Trend:

Combine survey results, observation report results, trap days and catch rate (effort), and sex/age structure to predict trend in table format and in text form.

Recommendations or Management Evaluation:

Trapping District 5 (Unglaciated Plains and Mountains)

Description:

Counties:

Habitat Conditions:

Management Direction:

Population Data:

Surveys: (lagamorph for bobcats)
Logbooks:
Occurrence Reports:

Harvest Statistics:

Harvest:
Trap Days:
Catch Rate:

Lab data presented - from skull collections in graph and table format with text. Sex, age structure and other biological information.

Trapping District (Ecoregion) Population Status and Trend:

Combine survey results, trap days and catch rate (effort), and sex/age structure to predict trend in table format and in text form.

Recommendations or Management Evaluation:

Trapping District 6 (Glaciated Plains)

Description:

Counties:

Habitat Conditions:

Management Direction:

Population Data:

Surveys: (lagamorph for bobcats)
Logbooks: (swift fox, otter)
Occurrence Reports: (swift fox, otter)

Harvest Statistics:

Harvest:
Trap Days:
Catch Rate:

Lab data presented - from bobcat skull collections in graph and table format with text. Sex, age structure.

Trapping District (Ecoregion) Population Status and Trend:

Combine survey results, trap days and catch rate (effort), and sex/age structure to predict trend in table format and in text form.

Recommendations or Management Evaluation:

Trapping District 7 (Unglaciated Plains)

Description:

Counties:

Habitat Conditions:

Management Direction:

Population Data:

Surveys: (lagamorph for bobcats)
Logbooks: (swift fox and otter)
Occurrence Reports: (swift fox and otter)

Harvest Statistics:

Harvest:
Trap Days:
Catch Rate:

Lab data presented - from bobcat skull collections in graph and table format with text. Sex, age structure.

Trapping District (Ecoregion) Population Status and Trend:

Combine survey results, trap days and catch rate (effort), and sex/age structure to predict trend in table format and in text form.

Recommendations or Management Evaluation:

Literature Cited

Aune,K.E., and P. Schladweiler. 1993. Wildlife laboratory annual report. December 1993. Montana Dept. of Fish, Wild. and Parks. Helena, MT 68 pp.

Haskins,C., B. Hoskins, and T. Lonner. 1993. Trapping and fur harvest report. December 1993. Montana Dept. of Fish, Wild. and Parks. Helena, MT 34 pp.

Appendix

License sales bar graph by district.

Harvest numbers each species for all years.

Current year registered harvest dbase printout.